

STATE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE

January 29, 1957

THE FACTS CONCERNING CHINESE COMMUNIST FAILURE  
TO RELEASE IMPRISONED AMERICANS

Communist spokesmen and propaganda media have intensified in recent weeks their efforts to mislead the world concerning the continued imprisonment in Communist China of six American civilians. These Americans are held in cynical disregard for an unqualified Chinese Communist pledge on September 10, 1955 to take measures for their release "expeditiously".

After having used other excuses to explain away or divert attention from their failure to keep their word, the Chinese Communists have now fallen back on the specious allegation that the United States has failed to keep its own commitment with respect to Chinese nationals in this country.

Although this allegation has been made repeatedly by Communist officials at the highest levels and by official Communist propaganda organs, there is no truth in it.

The facts are as follows:

On September 10, 1955, the United States Government and the Chinese Communists, on the basis of Ambassadorial talks begun at Geneva on August 1, 1955, issued simultaneous announcements making identical pledges concerning the respective nationals of either side desiring to return home.

The full texts of the announcements are attached. They contain the unequivocal promise to take "appropriate measures so that they (American and Chinese nationals desiring to return) can expeditiously exercise their right to return".

At the time of these declarations there were nineteen American civilians known to be held in Communist China against their will. Today there still are six.

On the other hand there was at that time no Chinese resident in the United States who had evidenced a desire to go to Communist China and who was being prevented from doing so. That was the case since before the beginning of the Ambassadorial talks and has continued to be the case to the present time.

The United States, nevertheless, made the announcement cited above because the Communists insisted that they would not make such a commitment unless accompanied by a parallel statement on the part of the United States. The United States has, in fact, gone to great lengths to carry out meticulously its commitment under the Agreed Announcement of September 10, 1955. We have widely publicized by press, television and radio the right of any Chinese to return to Communist China unhindered. We placed in 35,000 post offices throughout the country notices containing the text of the Agreed Announcement. On several occasions we have publicly called on anyone to come forward who knows of any Chinese who believes his departure is being obstructed. There has not been a single response.

The Indian Embassy, as provided by the Agreed Announcement, has been authorized to make representation on behalf of any such Chinese, and has brought no case to our attention of any Chinese being prevented by the United States from returning to Communist China.

When the Agreed Announcement was signed, there had been no discussion whatever to suggest that it was intended to apply to common criminals, such as narcotic offenders. In fact the only prisoners ever discussed in the talks leading to the announcement were Americans imprisoned in Communist China. However, when the Chinese Communists gave as a reason for non-compliance with the Agreed Announcement the fact that certain Chinese citizens were in fact in American prisons, we acted promptly to dispel any possible question on that score.

Last May 31, 1956 the Department of State gave the Indian Embassy a complete list of all Chinese convicts in Federal and State penitentiaries, a total of 34, and invited the Embassy to interview them to ascertain whether they desired to be released for the purpose of going either to Communist China or Taiwan. The Chinese Communists refused to authorize the Indian Embassy to conduct these interviews, and they were carried out instead by the American National Red Cross. By the time of the interviews the normal parole process had reduced the number of prisoners from 34 to 24. The Red Cross found that out of the 24, one prisoner desired to go to Communist China and two to Taiwan. All of the other preferred to serve out their sentences in the United States.

The prisoner who expressed a desire to go to Communist China was deported to that destination on October 29, 1956. He had then served two and a half years of a seven-to-twenty-year sentence for manslaughter. Of the two prisoners desiring to go to Taiwan, one was deported September 15, 1957, the other changed his mind and elected to serve out his sentence in the U.S.

The Department of State repeats that if there is any Chinese in the United States who desires to return to Communist China and believes he is being prevented from doing so he should at once communicate with the Department directly or through the Indian Embassy, and his departure will be facilitated immediately.

Not only are all Chinese free to depart this country, but since July 11 of 1955 many hundreds have done so without being hindered in any way. The United States Government has no means of knowing the final destination of any of these who have departed. Of the total who have left at least 425 are known to have returned direct to the China mainland through Hong Kong by ship from the United States in the period from the beginning of the Geneva ambassadorial talks through 31 December 1956.

Failure to take measures for the release of the six Americans is not the only violation of the Agreed Announcement of which the Chinese Communist are guilty. They have also repeatedly denied to these prisoners the right of communication with the British Embassy in Peiping which is explicitly guaranteed to them.

The United States, on the other hand, has offered and continues to offer any Chinese in this country, regardless of status, the unrestricted right to communicate with the Indian Embassy at any time if he believes his right to depart is being obstructed.

The Agreed Announcement represents the first and only parallel commitment ever made by the United States and Communist China. The attitude of the Chinese Communists toward performance of their obligation cannot but affect the weight to be given to future promises from the same regime.

Attachment:

Text of Agreed Announcement of September 10, 1955.

**STATE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE**

**September 10, 1955**

**AGREED ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE AMBASSADORS OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND  
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

The Ambassadors of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China have agreed to announce measures which their respective governments have adopted concerning the return of civilians to their respective countries.

With respect to Chinese in the United States, Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, on behalf of the United States, has informed Ambassador Wang Ping-nan that:

1. The United States recognized that Chinese in the United States who desire to return to the People's Republic of China are entitled to do so and declares that it has adopted and will further adopt appropriate measures so that they can expeditiously exercise their right to return.
2. The Government of the Republic of India will be invited to assist in the return to the People's Republic of China of those who desire to do so as follows:
  - A. If any Chinese in the United States believes that contrary to the declared policy of the United States he is encountering obstruction in departure, he may so inform the Embassy of the Republic of India in the United States and request it to make representations on his behalf to the United States Government. If desired by the People's Republic of China, the Government of the Republic of India may also investigate the facts in any such case.
  - B. If any Chinese in the United States who desires to return to the People's Republic of China has difficulty in paying his return expenses, the Government of the Republic of India may render him financial assistance needed to permit his return.
3. The United States Government will give wide publicity to the foregoing arrangements and the Embassy of the Republic of India in the United States may also do so.

With respect to Americans in the People's Republic of China, Ambassador Wang Ping-nan, on behalf of the People's Republic of China, has informed Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson that:

1. The People's Republic of China recognizes that Americans in the People's Republic of China who desire to return to the United States are entitled to do so, and declares that it has adopted and will further adopt appropriate measures so that they can expeditiously exercise their right to return.
2. The Government of the United Kingdom will be invited to assist in the return to the United States of those Americans who desire to do so as follows:
  - A. If any American in the People's Republic of China believes that contrary to the declared policy of the People's Republic of China he is encountering obstruction in departure, he may so inform the Office of the Charge d'Affaires of the United Kingdom in the People's Republic of China and request it to make representations on his behalf to the Government of the People's Republic of China. If desired by the United States, the Government of the United Kingdom may also investigate the facts in any such case.
  - B. If any American in the People's Republic of China who desires to return to the United States has difficulty in paying his return expenses, the Government of the United Kingdom may render him financial assistance needed to permit his return.
3. The Government of the People's Republic of China will give wide publicity to the foregoing arrangements and the Office of the Charge d'Affaires of the United Kingdom in the People's Republic of China may also do so.

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